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Advisors using workarounds as total tech integration still a dream
By Rob Burgess
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When asked what technology improvements would be most helpful for advisors in 2026, Dan Pascone echoed what many have been wanting for a while: It's not about adding new tools, but making the existing ones work together.

If onboarding, planning, portfolio management and client communication all happened in one ecosystem without any clunky workarounds, that would be a game-changer, said Pascone, founder and CEO of Tailored Wealth in Fairfield, Connecticut.

"Every fintech company wants to be the 'all-in-one' solution, but in reality, most advisors are still stitching together three or four different platforms," he said.

The wealth management industry has confused having more technology with having better technology, said William Trout, director of securities and investments at technology data firm Datos Insights.

"Advisors don't need another best-in-class point solution," he said. "They need the five tools they already use to actually talk to each other. Until that happens, technology is making advice harder to deliver, not easier."

The problem isn't just integration, Trout said, it's that every vendor optimizes their own workflows, not the advisor's actual work requirements.

"You end up with five excellent point solutions that require advisors to become data translators rather than advisors," he said.

Advisors have found workarounds for these gaps, but they aren't always easy, cheap or intuitive.

How integration failures show up, and why they matter
A new client's information often gets manually entered into five or six systems — including CRM, portfolio management, financial planning, document management and billing — with no data sharing between them, said Trout. Account values display differently across platforms because data pulls happen at different times or use different methodologies, forcing advisors to spend client meetings reconciling numbers rather than discussing strategy.

"Quarterly reviews that should take 15 minutes instead consume two hours as advisors manually pull data from portfolio systems, tax projections from planning software and performance from analytics tools to assemble into presentations," he said.

High net worth clients expecting seamless experiences encounter fragmented onboarding processes touching seven to 10 different systems, each with its own forms and workflows, said Trout.

"Compliance surveillance becomes nearly impossible when advisor and client communications scatter across email, texts, CRM notes and planning software with no single source of truth, leaving firms exposed to regulatory risk," he said.

Which fintechs are making progress

Looking at what works well, Trout said the exceptions prove the rule.

Custodians like Schwab, Fidelity and Pershing have strong APIs, and portfolio management vendors like Orion, Black Diamond and Tamarac built their businesses on custodian data feeds.

"It's not perfect, but it's functional," he said.

Some vendors achieve integration by controlling the entire stack, said Trout. With Wealthfront and Betterment, integration is seamless, he said.

"But this only works for simple use cases," he said.

Built for family offices, Addepar integrates data aggregation, reporting and performance, which "works well but is expensive and complex," said Trout.

eMoney and MoneyGuidePro have decent tax projection integration because tax is central to planning, said Trout, but they still don't connect well to actual tax preparation software like Lacerte and ProConnect.

Envestnet is attempting to own CRM with Tamarac, portfolio management, financial planning with MoneyGuidePro and models with PMC, he said.

"Integration is better than best-of-breed, but it's still imperfect," he said.

Gitanjali Kumar, financial planner at Worthique, has seen both sides, having spent over a decade as a product manager at fintechs including Advisor Software, Fiserv and AssetMark. Now, as an advisor, she uses close to 10 different tools across CRM, financial planning, tax analysis, portfolio management, billing, e-signature, AI notes and marketing. She said she originally aimed to limit her tech stack to three or four systems.

"I'm not proud of it," she said.

Kumar said she has seen platforms like Envestnet and Advyzon making real progress toward integration, but advisors still haven't found an ideal system.

"If smarter integrations or acquisitions can realistically cut my stack in half,

that's meaningful progress," she said. "Until then, advisors like me remain the integration layer, spending a lot of time on technology back-end work for their clients."

The workarounds advisors are using

Firms have developed several workarounds to address integration gaps, each with significant trade-offs, said Trout.

High-end RIAs and family offices often hire operations specialists to manually move data between systems — essentially human APIs — which works but doesn't scale beyond boutique practices, he said.

"Some firms designate one platform as their 'source of truth,' typically CRM or portfolio management systems like Orion or Salesforce, and route everything through it," he said. "Though this creates vendor lock-in and limits firms to that vendor's integration partnerships."

Tech-savvy advisors build custom integrations using tools like Zapier or enterprise integration solutions, but this requires ongoing technical expertise and creates fragility as every software update risks breaking connections, said Trout.

Other firms abandon workflow integration entirely and focus on the reporting layer, using tools like Holistiplan or custom Microsoft Power BI dashboards to pull data from multiple sources just for client presentations, accepting that underlying processes remain fragmented, he said.

"Some firms surrender to 'platform consolidation,' moving entirely to one vendor's ecosystem — what Envestnet, Orion, and increasingly Schwab pursue — gaining integration at the cost of best-in-class capabilities and innovation," he said.

Having been through multiple CRM, marketing, billing, estate planning, tax planning, investment research and trading platforms, Stoy Hall, founder and CEO of Black Mammoth, an RIA in Ankeny, Iowa, said his workaround has been to cut traditional CRMs and other fintechs out of the loop, "and go back to the old school of Microsoft Excel and our own internal reporting."

"It is less efficient, yes," he said. "However, the headaches our clients have had aren't worth the cost."

As a modern family office with a clientele of 27, with a maximum of 40, Hall said they are able to make do with less efficient processes for now.

"That being said, it still takes too much time and brain power when it shouldn't," he said.